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23 May 1957

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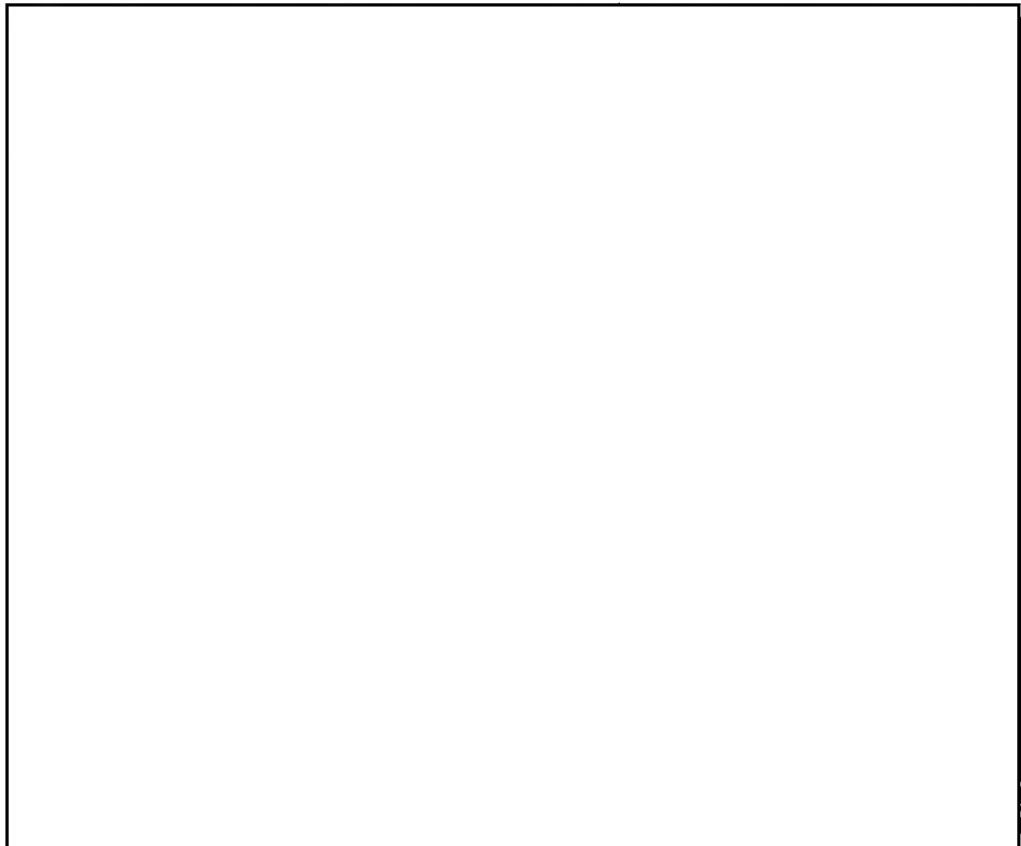
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2. ISRAELI MOVES ON PASSAGE OF TIRAN STRAIT AND SUEZ CANAL

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According to CINCNELM, Lloyds has reported that the Israeli motor ship Atlit, which has been scheduled as the first Israeli-flag merchant vessel to go through the Strait of Tiran to Eilat since the Israeli evacuation of Sinai, left Durban on 18 May for Lourenco Marques. On the basis of this report, it is estimated that the Atlit will not arrive at Eilat until between 7 and 17 June.

Press reports alleging that the Atlit had left Djibouti and even had already passed the Tiran Strait are probably part of an Israeli-inspired psychological warfare campaign to provoke Egypt and Saudi Arabia into actions or statements which would give Israel a diplomatic advantage on this issue.

The Israelis apparently are pursuing a similar tactic on the Suez Canal issue. The American embassy in Paris has reported that an Israeli embassy official there briefed selected correspondents on 20 May to the effect that a canal test is imminent. He did not specify whether the test would be made by an Israeli ship or an another vessel carrying Israeli cargo. Israeli officials had assured the United States last week that such press reports are "premature," and that Israel had no present plans for a test.

The chief of the Israeli naval force told the American naval attaché in Tel Aviv on 20 May that he expected no military conflict with the Arabs over the canal or the strait question at this time. The Israeli officer said he believed Nasr had given the Saudis responsibility for defending the Tiran Strait, and that Nasr will use the Saudis as a scapegoat on this issue.

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3. ISRAEL MAY REGISTER PROTEST WITH UN SECURITY COUNCIL OVER NEW INCIDENT IN NEGEV

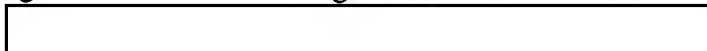
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The Israeli Foreign Ministry informed the American embassy that Israel would probably protest to the UN Security Council concerning three ambushes which occurred on the Beersheba-Eilat road in the southern Negev Desert on 20 May. One Israeli was killed and three were injured. The ministry reiterated that its present policy is to call such incidents to the attention of the Security Council in view of what it asserts is the ineffectiveness of the Truce Supervisory Organization.

Comment

The projected Israeli protest is probably planned as a counter to the Syrian protest now before the Security Council concerning the possible military significance of a bridge the Israelis are building at Lake Hula.



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